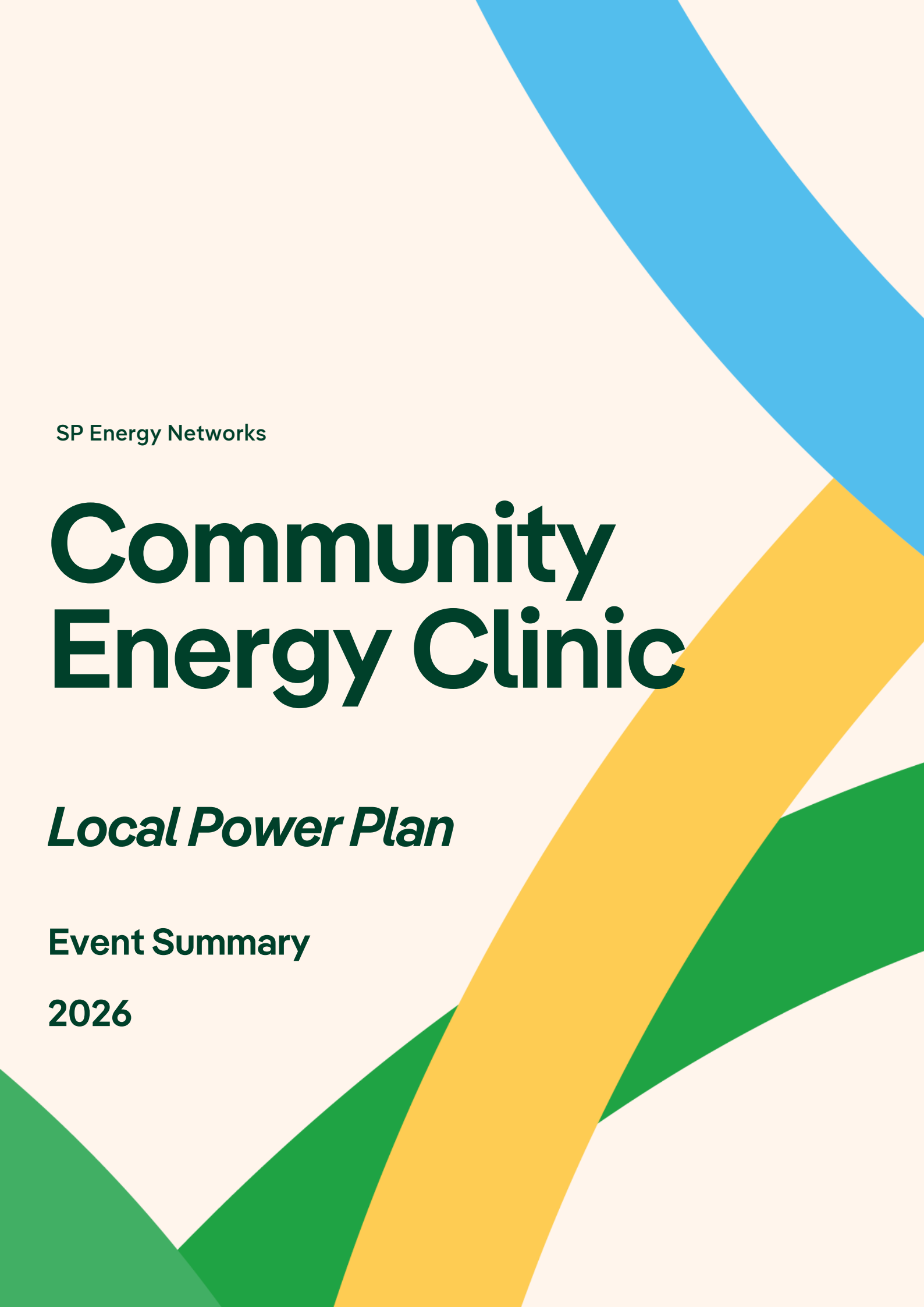




SP Energy Networks

Community Energy Clinic

Local Power Plan

Event Summary

2026

Context

On 19 May 2026, SP Energy Networks and Regen, with support from Community Energy Scotland, hosted a Community Energy Clinic on GB Energy and the Local Power Plan (LPP), exploring:

- The contents of the Local Power Plan and GB Energy's strategic aims
- The opportunities being presented by GB Energy's work, and their potential timeline
- Key asks from the sector for the LPP and GB Energy's work

This document summarises the main themes from the presentations and covers some of the frequently asked questions. You can watch the full recording [here](#).

SP Energy Networks' role in supporting community energy

The UK government's Clean Power 2030 mission has signalled an acceleration of the energy transition, bringing community energy back into policy focus. The Local Power Plan, to be delivered by Great British Energy, aims to support 1,000 locally and community-owned projects by 2030, with up to £400m in new funding for community power. In addition, the Scottish government has a longstanding goal of 2 GW of community and locally owned energy by 2030. Networks will be a key part of building out grid infrastructure and enabling the delivery and connection of community energy projects.

SP Energy Networks has a track record of supporting community energy, both directly through funding (such as the Green Economy Fund and the Transmission Net Zero Fund) and support activities, which includes ongoing headline sponsorship of the UK Community Energy State of the Sector research programme, and within its regulatory activities.

Under the RIIO-ED2 framework (2023-2028), SP Energy Networks developed a bespoke community energy strategy and recently delivered newsletters, guides and interactive workshops to help community energy groups share learnings and develop an understanding of critical network and community energy issues. This includes a full, six-step [Community Energy Journey](#). As of 2024, 70 community energy organisations were operational across SP Energy Networks' SPT/SPD and SPM licence areas, representing more than 10,000 individual members.

SP Energy Networks is currently developing its new Community Energy Strategy, which is planned for launch in autumn 2026. For more on SP Energy Networks' community energy support and access to resources, visit the Community Energy Portal [here](#).

Local Power Plan: strategy to delivery

Fraser Stewart, Head of Local Energy Strategy at GB Energy, delivered a brief presentation detailing further the work that GBE Local is doing. As one of GB Energy's four main areas of activity, GBE Local sits alongside Offshore Energy, Onshore Energy, and the supply chain function, known as 'Energy, Engineered in the UK' and is responsible for making local energy and community ownership commonplace, ensuring that communities and public services directly benefit from the infrastructure they host.

Fraser outlined GBE Local's analysis of the gaps, market failures and barriers in the current community energy market and its role in addressing some of these challenges, including acting as an aggregator and coordinator,

standardising local energy delivery, unlocking early-stage investment and low-cost finance, building capacity and creating long-term public value.

His presentation outlined GBE Local's core principles: pace of delivery, fairness and innovation. It also emphasised a clear prioritisation of community ownership, followed by shared ownership and public sector ownership. Fraser also highlighted the importance of partnership working, making clear that GBE Local aims to complement and build on the work already taking place across the sector.

Finally, he detailed GBE Local's phased approach to this support, with the first phase focusing on high-opportunity models that are already commercially viable today: behind-the-meter solar and storage, and in-front-of-the-meter solar, storage and wind, as well as shared ownership. Phase two will focus more on smart local energy systems and helping to unlock new models.

Panel and Q&A session

The following section summarises the main themes of the panel discussion and the Q&A that followed. The panellists were:

- Fraser Stewart, Head of Local Energy Strategy, GB Energy
- Morven Lyon, Head of Democratic Finance, Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS)
- Leanne Wood, Co-Executive director, Ynni Cymunedol Cymru/Community Energy Wales
- Pete Capener, Managing Director, Bath & West Community Energy
- Jessica Hogan, Project Manager, Regen (chair)

Expression of Interest responses from GB Energy

Several attendees asked about the Expression of Interest forms that GBE Local had requested sector representatives complete earlier this year. These were intended to capture details of local and community energy projects and help GBE understand the scope of projects currently being developed across the UK. At the time of the clinic, GBE Local had received more than 800 responses and was reviewing them individually, with responses expected imminently.

Funding timelines for GB Energy

Fraser noted that work is progressing on the GB Communities Fund and the Local Partnerships Fund, with both expected to launch later this year. However, timelines are not yet available. GBE will continue to communicate any relevant updates or opportunities as they emerge ahead of the main funding launches.

For more information about GBE's funds and products, a series of three webinars in July 2026 will provide insights into grants and other tools that will be released as part of the Local Power Plan. You can find out more and register [here](#).

Challenges of getting connected to the grid

The challenge of connecting community energy projects to the grid was raised both in the panel discussion and the Q&A. Pete Capener made clear that there wasn't a silver bullet to getting around this barrier, but that there was a role for GBE to underwrite and remove some of the early project development risk while community organisations are establishing the feasibility of a grid connection, particularly as the connection queue now prioritises projects that are 'shovel-ready'. There was also a desire to explore designating community energy projects as 'needed' in the Clean Power 2030 mission to accelerate their grid connection process.

There was also mention more broadly on the ongoing grid connection reform, and positivity that the Transmission Impact Assessment threshold had been raised to 5 MW in England and Wales in May 2025, and also sits at 5 MW in Northern Ireland. However, in Scotland, the threshold sits at 200 kW for the mainland and 50 kW for the islands, but [change is being pushed for in this area](#). Visit NESO's [Connections Reform](#) page for more information.

In response, Fraser noted that grid connection challenges were one reason behind GBE's focus on behind-the-meter projects, alongside shared ownership. GBE does not currently have the policy levers to address grid connection issues directly, but is keen to explore whether there are ways to support projects in more targeted ways.

SP Energy Networks also provided follow-up clarification, noting that Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) are currently required to operate within a regulated, first-come, first-served connections framework, with limited ability to prioritise specific customer groups. It noted, however, that DNOs can improve the customer experience by offering more tailored support throughout the connections journey, including clearer and more accessible guidance and simpler customer processes. SP Energy Networks would welcome the opportunity to engage constructively with any future reforms, but noted that changes would depend on clear policy intent and defined regulatory mechanisms.

Creating innovative interventions that add value to the sector

One of the central themes of the discussion was that the interventions GBE implements will need to be carefully designed, particularly to avoid crowding out community finance through capital grants or undermining the current market operations of projects.

Two other areas received strong focus:

- **Energy communities** and the ambition to maximise the amount of personally owned energy within a local area. Energy communities, as suggested by Leanne Wood, are an opportunity to build local resilience and reduce the costs of energy if local supply is enabled. GBE is keen to explore whether there may be ways for future programmes to support local actors in developing these, taking a nuanced approach to where it can add value.
- **Local supply**, and why it appeared to have received less strategic focus than investment in new grid infrastructure. SP Energy Networks highlights that local flexibility, storage and smart energy solutions all have an important role to play in managing network constraints. However, these solutions are not always a substitute for network reinforcement, particularly in areas with rapidly growing demand. Flexibility is used where it is the least-cost and most practical option. The balance between local flexibility and network reinforcement is set at a national level, with the government's [Clean Flexibility Roadmap](#) setting out steps towards the appropriate approach for local flexibility.

Community ownership as a priority

There was broad agreement with GBE Local's assessment that community ownership should be a central funding priority. There was a desire to see the additional value generated by community ownership reflected in policy, particularly where projects deliver democratic governance, local accountability and lasting community benefit.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is currently developing a definition of community energy, which was seen as important for distinguishing genuinely community-led projects from other 'local' projects that may have less democratic governance or weaker community benefit.

The discussion also recognised that community ownership does not always need to mean full ownership by a local community organisation. One attendee noted that, in the case of community benefit societies, value is distributed locally even where ownership is not entirely community based. However, there was still clear value in local communities having a meaningful ownership and governance stake, so they can influence organisational decisions and ensure projects are shaped around local needs, demographics, housing stock and geography.

DTAS suggested that majority local ownership is sufficient, provided the organisation is member-led and at least 51% of members are local.

Coordinating with and amplifying the work of devolved nations

Both Scotland and Wales have made considerable progress and have significant ambition in the community energy space. There is an established ecosystem of support, both developmental and financial. In Wales especially, there are multiple governmental bodies with a remit in the community and local ownership space (Ynni Cymru, Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru, the Welsh Government Energy Service). It was noted that there is a need to ensure that the Local Power Plan fits in with the work and support that already exists in the devolved nations and acknowledges where significant progress might have already been made.

GBE is currently in discussion with the devolved nations to understand how its work can complement and amplify existing activity.

Building awareness, confidence and capacity

The importance of building awareness, confidence and capacity was highlighted throughout the discussion of GBE Local's delivery strategy, and was reinforced by both panellists and attendees.

There was particular interest in support that is practical, place-based and delivered through sustained engagement, especially in areas of multiple deprivation and with minority ethnic communities. CARES' [Community Energy Launchpad](#), delivered in partnership with Community Energy Scotland and Development Trusts Association Scotland, was highlighted as a strong example of this kind of foundational work.

Closing note

Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the discussion. We are sorry we were not able to answer every question during the session. Where possible, we have addressed the most frequently asked questions here.

Our thanks also to Community Energy Scotland for reviewing this summary and providing additional insight.

For more information about SP Energy Networks' work in the community energy space, and for access to the latest resources, events and support, visit the community energy portal [here](#).